Contact:
Virginija Morgan
USAID Communications Specialist
Tel.: 7-727-250-7612, ext. 6414
http://centralasia.usaid.gov

PRESS RELEASE

Kazakh National Medical University Receives State of the Art Equipment for Laboratory Trainings

The United States Government on March 25, 2008 presented a state-of-the-art real-time PCR machine to the Kazakh National Medical University to support the country's preparedness for avian and pandemic influenza. The equipment was delivered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It will be used by the University's Department of Laboratory Diagnostics and Molecular Medicine to train medical professionals in the detection of avian influenza virus and other dangerous viruses of public health importance.

Thanks to the donation, the Kazakh National Medical University is the first medical school in the country that has such equipment and is able to prepare specialists to use such machines in their workplaces. Real-time PCR is considered to be the best technique for the initial diagnosis of influenza A (H5N1), the "bird flu," in humans. It is also useful for diagnosing a wide range of infections, including viral hepatitis, tuberculosis, brucellosis and acute respiratory disease, as well as for medical research.

"This state-of-the-art instrument will significantly increase the capabilities of the university, but it is just a small part of a long and durable partnership in health between the governments of Kazakhstan and the United States," said USAID Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator Mark Ward at the handover ceremony. "Over the past 15 years, the U.S. Government, through USAID, has delivered nearly $500 million to assist with Kazakhstan's economic growth, health care, and democratic institutions."

Head of the Department of Laboratory Diagnostics and Molecular Medicine of the University, professor Sholpan Beisembaeva said that the assistance in health from USAID and CDC has been especially productive. "This equipment donation is a 'dream come true.' We look forward to training students and medial specialists in using real-time PCR to detect various diseases, so that patients can receive more effective treatment."

The donation, which costs $70,000, includes not only the PCR machine itself but some ancillary equipment. The university has already received a high number of applications to provide trainings in its use to specialists from Almaty and other regions of Kazakhstan.

###